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**OPPOSITION MODELS OF THE BODY CODE  
IN THE MAGICAL PRACTICES OF THE SLAVS**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the paper is to study the semantics of the “sitting” position in the ritual practices of the Slavs in the context of bodily oppositions. **The Methodology of the Research.** In the study there have been used the methods of structural anthropology, in which a cultural text is seen as a system of semantic balances and counterbalances. **The Scientific Novelty.** The article focuses on the analysis of the oppositional models of the body code in the ritual practices of the Slavs. **The Conclusions.** In the mythological picture of the world, the sequence of ritual actions should follow the process of “divine providence”, which ends with the creation of man. As a result, a human body is a model of a sacred space organization. The repetition of natural locations, which is imitated by a participant of a rite, involves the transformation of global values into a plane of specific meanings. In particular, a horizontal position of a body is interpreted as inanimate, while a vertical state corresponds to the opposite value. At the same time, the ritual names of “horizontal / dead” include the idea of further resurrection (the prospect of bodily verticalization), as evidenced by taboo forms with a direct hint of the temporality of this state (“dead”, “deceased”). Thus, the myth denies the idea of an absolute completion, and life is understood as the alternation of birth and death.*

*In contrast to the dual vertical and horizontal arrangements that denote the states of “life-death”, status mythological characters are in an intermediate (neutral) “sitting” position. Significant are the descriptions of their locations – on the island, the blue sea, under / near the tree, which symbolize the imaginary return of the patient at the time of creation of the world (the state of “pre-disease”). The main feature of “sitting” characters is the refusal to perform the work of “living”, associated with the manufacture of thread and canvas. Involvement in spinning and weaving associates these images with the goddesses of fate, who by the logic of the myth should “weave” the thread of life, but do not. A negative characteristics of the images of the goddess of fate are compared to the magic of healing-magic-destruction, which is realized by the reverse rotation of the spindle. Changing the direction of movement provokes opposite consequences – the transformation of “sick” to “healthy”, “indifferent” to “in love” or “living” to “dead”. For this reason, the “sitting” images of “grandma” and “virgin” have dual characteristics, combining the opposite states of “life” and “death”, which explains the dosed use of the attributes of the funeral cult in medical rites.*

*The semantics of mythological characters with signs of the “otherworldly” is compared with the image of an archaic genitrix. The rudiments of honoring the great mother are recorded in oronyms,*

which could be used as ancient sanctuaries. A similar function is taken over by landscape objects of an artificial origin, for example, mounds on which anthropomorphic stone stelae were placed, or graves, the ceremonial use of which is combined with a sacrificial “throne”, which on funeral days serves as a kind of portal connecting “living” and “dead”. Ritualized elements of a “sitting” position are also recorded in transitional rites – at funerals while sitting next to / with the “deceased”, ceremonies of age initiations, enthronement ceremonies. In this way there is a ritual imitation of the actions of the Creator-Savior, who “sits” on the heavenly throne and justly rules the world.

**Key words:** goddess of fate, witch, axis of the world, divination, myth, sitting position, deceased, ancestor, ritual, world tree, Slavs, body.

## ОПОЗИЦІЙНІ МОДЕЛІ ТІЛЕСНОГО КОДУ В МАГІЧНИХ ПРАКТИКАХ СЛОВ'ЯН

**Анотація.** *Мета статті* полягає у вивченні семантики позиції “сидячи” у контексті тілесних опозицій. **Методи.** У дослідженні використовуються методи структурної антропології, де культурний текст розглядається як система бінарних балансів і противаг. **Наукова новизна:** вперше досліджено опозиційні моделі тілесного коду в обрядових практиках слов'ян. **Висновки.** У міфологічній картині світу послідовність виконання обрядових дій має наслідувати процес “божественного промислу”, яке завершується творенням людини. Внаслідок цього людське тіло є моделлю організації сакрального простору. Повторення природних розташувань, які наслідує учасник обряду, передбачає трансформацію глобальних значень у площину конкретних смислів. Зокрема горизонтальне розташування тіла трактується як неживе, натомість вертикальний стан відповідає протилежному значенню. Водночас в обрядових називаннях “горизонтального / мертвого” закладено ідею подальшого воскресіння (перспектива тілесної вертикалізації), про що свідчать табуйовані форми з безпосереднім натяком на тимчасовість цього стану (“покійний”, “усопший”). Таким чином, у міфі заперечується ідея абсолютного завершення, а життя розуміється як чергування народження-умирання.

На відміну від дуальних вертикально-горизонтальних розташувань, які позначають стани “життя-смерті”, статусні міфологічні персонажі перебувають у проміжній (нейтральній) позиції “сидячи”. Знаковими є описи місць їхнього розміщення – на острові, синьому морі, під/поряд з деревом, які символізують уявне повернення хворого у часи творення світу (стан “до-хвороби”). Головною рисою “сидячих” персонажів є відмова виконувати роботу “живих”, пов'язану з виготовленням нитки і полотна (мотиви прядіння фіксуються також у гончарстві).

Причетність до прядіння і ткацтва асоціює ці образи з богинями долі, які, за логікою міфу, мають “ткати” нитку життя, але не роблять цього. Від'ємні характеристики образів богині долі зіставляються з магією лікування-чарування-знищення, що реалізується за допомогою зворотного обертання веретена. Зміна напрямку руху провокує протилежні наслідки – перетворення “хворого” на “здорового”, “байдужого” на “закоханого” або “живого” на “мертвого”. З цієї причини “сидячі” образи “бабки” і “дівці” мають дуальні характеристики, поєднуючи протилежні стани “життя” і “смерті”, що пояснює дозоване застосування атрибутів поховального культу в лікувальних обрядах.

Семантика міфологічних персонажів з ознаками “потойбічного” зіставляється з образом архаїчної *genitrix*. Рудименти вишунування великої матері фіксуються в оронімах, які могли використовувати як давні святини. Аналогічну функцію переймають ландшафтні об'єкти штучного походження, наприклад, кургани, на яких ставили антропоморфні кам'яні стели, або могили, обрядове застосування яких поєднується з жертвним “престолом”, що в поминальні дні виконує функцію своєрідного порталу, який з'єднує “живих” і “мертвих”. Ритуалізовані елементи позиції “сидячи” фіксуються також у перехідних обрядах – на похоронах під час сидіння поряд / з “небіжчиком”, церемоніях вікових посвячень, церемоніях інтронізації. В такий спосіб відбувається обрядове наслідування дії Творця-Спасителя, який “сидить” на небесному престолі і справедливо править світом.

**Ключові слова:** богині долі, відьма, вісь світу, ворожіння, міф, позиція “сидячи”, покійник, пращур, ритуал, світове дерево, слов'яни, тіло.

**The Problem Statement.** A relevant aspect of a traditional culture is the functioning of discursive communication models of myth, where the verbal component can play a secondary role. Sometimes the key factor that forms the integrative ties of the rite is the visual contact of its performers with each other, with natural or cultural objects. However, a human body is a leading model for imitation and construction of the ritual space. In addition to the well-known oppositions “top-bottom”, “right-left”, “front-back” (as a variant of “front-back”), with the help of which the mythological picture of the world is anthropologized, the plot elements of the ritual in the “sitting” position, which its members acquire, remain poorly researched.

**The Analysis of Sources and Recent Researches.** Despite the fact that the “sitting” position is associated with initiation actions and involves the acquisition of a corresponding social-and-hierarchical status (Poshivailo, 2017, p. 68), (Tymoshyk, 2016), in the scientific literature this issue is covered only occasionally (Androshchuk, 2003), (Tubalova & Van, 2018), (Tubalova, Van, 2019). However, a “sitting” position is common in other rites of passage. In particular, in the descriptions of healing and magical practices, sacred characters are placed in a similar way: “Beyond the blue sea, there is a church, there is a throne, behind that throne Jesus Christ sits”; “Candles are burning, God himself is sitting” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 441, 727, 1019).

**The purpose of the article** involves the study of the semantics of the “sitting” position in the ceremonial practices of the Slavs in the context of bodily oppositions.

**The Results of the Research.** Emphasizing the fact that the sacris imago “sits” testifies the importance of this position, which, in its turn, is confirmed by textual references to the existence of cult “sitting” places, which can be rudiments of descriptions of pre-Christian shrines. According to the chronicles, the central element of the ancient Russian sanctuary was considered to be an oak tree, which formed its basis and symbolized the axis mundi, i. e., it performed the function of a kind of column connecting heaven and earth, where ritual artifacts were planted as reinforcement (Ivakin, 1979). The corresponding customs resemble the encrustations of a human body in “primitive” peoples or in representatives of modern subcultural groups, which is a necessary condition for the performance of initiation rites and indicates the degree of hierophants initiation. Probably the place near the center is considered to be the most prestigious, and proximity to it indicates the concentration of magical power, a radial distribution of which is projected onto other objects. In this context, the position of “sitting” acquires a different reading, demonstrating a primordial static that arose as a result of the original chaos ordering, equipped by the unshakable Word of the Creator. Therefore, “sitting” as a ritual action can be interpreted as a bodily expression of a creative impulse, therefore it is the prerogative of “stable” ancestors or their adepts – priests and rulers, who a priori are in the time-and-space position “before”. In contrast to social initiations in medical rites, the performance of which involves the “return” of a pre-disease state, primary examples of this stability are involved, personified in the images of a “grandfather” and “grandmother”, which, in its turn, additionally explains the semantics of the traditional beginning of folk tales – “a grandfather and grandmother lived for themselves”<sup>1</sup>. Subject models of the primary stability state, which often reinforce and sometimes duplicate anthropic images, are natural and

<sup>1</sup> More details about the semantics of the images of grandfather and grandmother are described in Natalia Syvachuk’s article “Semantics of the Images of the Ukrainian Folk Fairy Tale”. The author, referring to the research of M. Chumarnaya, notes: “Grandfather and Grandfather are not just involved in the creation of the world, they continue its creation, give birth to new entities. Movement gives birth to life. Grandmother asks Grandfather to carve out a wooden boy for her. Grandmother is an immortal, eternal substance, a life force, and she cradles, “bodies” the little wooden boy, bringing him to life through the energy of world movement. A tree, a log is not a dead matter, a wooden log retains a life force that is dormant until it is awakened by the energy of a living word, the strength of spirit and the power of faith” (Syvachuk, 2017, p. 72).

cultural objects, in particular: a stone, an oak, a pillar, a temple, etc. In particular, animization of an oak is recorded in the texts for children's insomnia: "I call you (nightingales)<sup>2</sup>, I send you to the woods, there is an oak in the forest, and there is a grandfather in the oak" (Recipes of folk medicine, 1992, p. 57). The production of totemic artifacts from "living" oak does not seem accidental in this aspect. In certain contexts, its strength is associated with iron – a later cultural standard of hardness and strength, which, in its turn, explains its anthropization: "Iron grandfather, iron woman, let's get married" (Recipes of folk medicine, 1992, p. 55).

Let's consider several typical examples of magical texts recorded in Belarus, where the "sitting" position has clear mythological overtones: "There is an oak at the blue sea, there are three branches on that oak, candles are burning on these branches, there is a stone under this oak, a grandmother is sitting under this oak. "Grandmother! Do you know how to weave?" "I don't know how to weave, I only know how to order гризь"<sup>3</sup> (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 570). The mentioned text (№ 570) lists the key expository components of the archaic rite: an oak tree with three branches, on which three ritual fires burn, as well as a stone which is the seat of the archaic ancestor / "grandmother". The corresponding description can be literal or taken metaphorically, i. e., during the recitation of a magical text, a situation is created, where the function of the oak tree is performed by the trinity candlestick, which is lit during the ritual. In terms of semantics, its shape is related to a tree and a cross at the same time, on the edges of which candles are placed (Sosenko, 1994, pp. 63–65). The indirect juxtaposition of the cross with the oak makes it possible to model the semantic chain: cross → oak → world tree / axis mundi. The reception of the cross as a tree can be traced in iconographic subjects of the "grape vine", as well as medieval heraldic images of the trefoil cross. Similar identifications can be observed in the lexical material, where "крижъ" (Polish: krzyż) is identified with "cross" (Dictionary of the Old Ukrainian language, 1977, p. 514) or the image of a mountain related to mythological semantics (Materials, 1893, p. 1322). In Chyhyryn region (Central Ukraine), an old tree is also called "криж", which corresponds to a mythological plot of the text under study. It is possible that a lamp, candles and a stone are a kind of mini-models of the exposition of the archaic rite, which used to be performed near a sacred tree (an oak) and an altar located next to it (a stone, a fire). Reproducing a pagan ritual on a table or on a cooking place (traditional places of treatment) was supposed not only to guarantee a positive result, but also to return its performers to the times "before the disease". In some ritual texts, the time range "before" can reach prehistoric times, which can be traced in the descriptions of the mythological landscape "a tree in the middle of the blue sea": "There is a green oak at the blue sea", "There is an oak tree at the blue sea" (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 207, 570), "A branchy, rooted oak stood at the sea, on the island" (Recipes of folk medicine, 1992, p. 67), which correlates with the mythical primeval tree in carols: "There is a big world, there is also a blue sea. Cherry trees grow at those blue seas" (Sosenko, 1994, p. 227). According to M. Nikolaeva and V. Safronov, similar descriptions refer to the landscape of the late Mesolithic period, when large parts of the land were flooded due to the melting of the glacier, which explains the semantics of prehistoric mythological beliefs about an island, a tree, a water demiurge bird and a world egg (Nikolaeva & Safronov, 1999).

The image of a "grandmother" seems to be iconic. In addition to the mentioned above characteristics, which indicate its semantic connection with an archaic ancestor, additional

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<sup>2</sup> Nightingales are demons that attack babies at night and prevent them from sleeping (Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, 1996, vol. 2, p. 568)

<sup>3</sup> "Гризь", Latin mordeo is the popular name of the acute stage of tendovaginitis.

factors are the mention of an altar stone (?), funeral candles (?), as well as the refusal to weave, that is, to perform the everyday work of the “living”. The corresponding signs can also be interpreted as a statement of the negative image of the goddess of fate, whose functions are diametrically opposed, in particular, the spinning of an even and strong thread of life<sup>4</sup>. Probably the origins of such beliefs go back to the Neolithic times, when spinning from fibrous plants was invented, which explains the general nature of the myths about the weaver goddess. Knitting threads one to another existed as far back as the Mesolithic times, when fishermen wove nets for fish and hunters wove tentacles for animals. Even then a spindle and a comb became necessary work tools, which explains the cultic nature of the semantic associations “spindle-life”, “comb-plants”<sup>5</sup>. It is natural that women who spun and wove participated not only in the manufacture of clothes, but contributed to survival a hunter in a cold climate, which stimulated a successful hunt, since only strong tentacles could hold the prey.

The refusal of a “grandmother” to spin is also compared to the magic of enchantment and destruction, the consequence of which is a change in the subject-and-time sequence, and thus it is the construction of an “alternative” reality. In particular, the cessation of the rotation of the spindle is associated with the stoppage of time, darkness and cold<sup>6</sup>, and *motum solis* models a return to the past or produces more radical changes – the transformation of the “earthly” into the “otherworldly” or the “living” into the “dead”<sup>7</sup>. For example, on Maundy Thursday they made the so-called the “Thursday thread” that was spun before sunrise (daily time correlates with cosmic time “pre-creation”), sitting on the threshold (spatial boundary), spinning the spindle against the movement of the sun (“unwinding” the time paradigm). “Thursday thread” is “raw” (Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, 1997, vol. 4, p. 231), i. e., not processed and not dyed (not fully humanized), which indicates its intermediate location between the diametrical meanings of “natural and wild”, “cultural and domestic”. In other words, the “raw” thread is a boundary object between a natural fiber and a thread itself, therefore it is used in rituals for the treatment of “unclean” diseases: “gnawing”, “suspension”, “blows”, muscle strains: “In the field you reap – the hand cracks – you will

<sup>4</sup> The semantic analogies of the weaving process with the flow of the river are interesting, i.e. the “correct” movement – along the current or the rotation of the spindle – of the saltine. Cf.: Old Russian *потокъ* borders on the concepts of “to weave”, “to sharpen” (Fasmer, 1986, vol. 2, p. 345) in the sense of “to foretell the future” (compare with Armenian *t'ek'em* – to spin, to weave, to wind). In this case, the flow of the river is perceived as a sign of the road to the “afterlife” and is associated with the thread of fate, which is “weaved” by the ancestors (Old *пекти* – to prophesy. Cf.: “рекомъ(и) ← рекъ ← рещи ← г(оспод)ъ пр(о)рокъмъ г(лаго)л(е)тъ ... иже ре” (Sljvník, 1982, p. 633). In this connection, comparisons with Kupala divination along the course of the river, as well as the custom of letting egg shells to Rahman on Easter “for with water”, which is a vestige of ancestors’ archaic cult

<sup>5</sup> The comb and spindle were used in the treatment of “sunflowers” – an acute stomach disease (Kuybida, Dovga), (Metka, 2012, p. 536). The corresponding function was performed by porridge, the “cultural” properties of which were opposed to otherworldly “sunflowers” (the finding that the seeds are unprocessed). The treatment took place as follows: a knife, a spoon, a spindle and a comb were placed in a bowl of porridge and they said: “It is not my spirit, it is the Lord’s. Merciful Lord and Saint Varvara, great martyr, help me to pronounce” (Chubynsky, 1995, p. 123). After that, the patient had to eat three spoons of “living” porridge “with the Lord’s spirit”, strengthened by the magic of killing-disengaging (knife), life-consuming (spoon), twisting-untwisting (spindle), arrangement (comb).

<sup>6</sup> By rapidly rotating the spindle around its axis, a “living” fire was obtained, which was also called “column” or “master”. Similar names are found in the dialectal sayings of Belarusians, which denoted a householder or an ancestor. On this fire, kindled in the furnace, colic and tuberculosis were “warmed”: “The baptized woman said: “Where did you see, where did you hear that the child was put in the furnace?” – “Where did you see, where did you hear, that a child was attacked by diarrhea?”. This was repeated three times. One (woman) holds the child, and the other holds the shovel, she leans the shovel (to the child) and the shovel is put into the oven” (Pretends to put the shovel and the child into the oven) (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 111).

<sup>7</sup> By making dishes on the potter’s wheel or turning the spindle, one joins in learning about the nature of the circle, which explains the mystification of crafts associated with rounded objects or centrifugal motion. Such a situation is compared to sacrificial rites, where the object of knowledge is not only the victim, but also the dishes from which it is consumed, which explains the semantic implications of everyday objects.



tie a thread”. “Christ’s linen, let those sores remain on the thread, so that (name) will not be remembered” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 226). Tying and maximum twisting of the thread implies the disappearance of warts that are “sown” like “unclean” plants (compare with the negative attitude towards twists and turns made by “enemies” and “witches”): “A raw thread is from warts, how many knots are tied on that thread and throw it into the well” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 350). Therefore, spinning “against the sun” is a taboo action, since the thread woven in this way is used for destruction-separation, which is incompatible with its domestic (cultural) use<sup>8</sup>.

Taking into account the mentioned above, it seems logical to assume that the ritually dosed verbalization of mortem (like the use of poison for medicinal purposes) suppresses acute pain, as if destroying the “gnawing”. In this regard, the image of a “grandmother” combines a semantic oppositions of “life-death”, as it relieves pain, but at the same time represents death (the diminutive form indirectly confirms this fact), which explains the semantics of its additional names: Serbian *jéza* – horror, Slavonic *jéza* – anger; Old-Czech *jězě* – witch, Church Slavonic *iaza* – disease (Fasmer, 1987, vol. 4, p. 542), possibly hence “ulcer” (Stepanov, 1997)<sup>9</sup>. In some cases, when a patient’s condition reached a critical state, the use of attributes of “that” world was literal. In particular, with acute rheumatic pains, it was recommended to apply an old bone or to bandage the sore spot with a tape (an element of a married woman’s traditional clothing, probably a grandmother’s?), with which a dead person’s legs were tied (“grandmother’s?”), saying: “This dead person lies still, let the God’s servant N gnaws away” (Recipes of folk medicine, 1992, p. 86).

It is obvious that in the mythological picture of the world, built on the principle of dual oppositions, the verbalization of the “productive” return “before” is opposed to immobilization of the “living”, which implies the occurrence of the opposite situation “after”, which models not the restoration of the time of Creation, but on the contrary – the dumbing down, numbness, and eventually its completion. Transferring the key features of “non-living” objects, and therefore their meanings, is practiced in the magic of destruction by simulating a state of freezing, the intensity of which causes temporary bodily paralysis or posthumous numbness: “I want you to become an oak, and I want you to become a stone, and I want you to get lost” (Chubynsky, 1995, p. 98). Probably the power of the curse was, if necessary, strengthened by additional components with the semantics of dehydration and cooling, such as “I want your hands to become dry” or “I want you to pound” in the sense of freezing (Bagan, 2020, p. 29)<sup>10</sup>. Hence the origin of such expressions as “to cut into an oak”, i.e., to become as hard as an oak tree, to shrivel up (cf.: *dubovýna* = coffin = grave (Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, 1996, vol. 1, pp. 452, 419).

An indirect confirmation of the fact that the image of a “grandmother” is associated with the “otherworldly” is a literal demonstration of a “grandmother’s” figure, which in terms of semantics is its semantic antipode. Not accidentally that stone “grandmothers” in the form

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<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the taboos on the day of Saint Paraskeva-Friday, when it was forbidden to use sharp objects, in particular a spindle, a needle, scissors, as means of winding-weaving, piercing and cutting, which is considered as spoiling the thread of fate are connected with this (Chubynsky, 1995, p. 214). Similar prohibitions were also projected on natural fibers – human hair and plant roots, which explains the Friday taboos on shaving the beard, washing the head and spinning (Tolstaya, 2009, pp. 382–385).

<sup>9</sup> The dialectic of “life-death” can also be seen in the semantic approximation of the concepts “sleepy-dead”, where sleep is perceived as temporary death: “Forest grandfathers and grandmothers, wow! Grandmother Yaga, whoa, whoa, whoa! Take the cries and carry them to the forest, and bring me (name) a dream” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 49).

<sup>10</sup> To pound – to be beaten (Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, 1996, vol. 2, p. 147), to wooden, cf. with assumption from lat. *stupĕre* – to become wooden, to become dead, to stiffen (The etymological dictionary, 1985, p. 138).

of anthropomorphic stelae perform the function of peculiar markers of mythical toponymy, marking places of power. Stone idols were placed on natural or artificial elevations<sup>11</sup>. Probably earlier ritual ceremonies were performed near sacred stones – seats (compare with Church Slavonic *преставитися* – “to die”, hence *приставщина* – “a ghost”?). Hence the names of oronyms associated with female symbolism: Divocha Hora near Smolensk, Divocha Hora in the village of Trypillia and Sakhnivka, the peaks of Divyn on the territory of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Divochi rocks in Ternopil region. Archaeological research confirms their cult character. In particular, the remains of a sanctuary from the first centuries AD were found on Divocha Hora in Trypillia. It was not by chance that other peoples associated the “Babyni” mountains with pagan Sabbaths (Dlugosz, 2009). In this aspect, a mythological “grandmother” corresponds to the archaic progenitor, plastic images of whom are recorded in the “sitting” position in Trypillia culture (Movsha, 1968, p. 22). Women of post-reproductive age who took delivery and used well-deserved authority in the community until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were similarly called. Probably, in traditional culture a nominative “grandmother” refers not so much to age, but to functional capabilities, which are associated with the image of an archaic priestess of fertility, as indicated by the nominative clarifications “midwife, branka, puporizka”. The weight of a mythological tradition can be traced in the image of the Mother of God. In particular, in magical healing texts she is depicted in a “sitting” position, which corresponds to the iconographic subjects “The Virgin Hodigitria on the Throne” (the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and “The Virgin Hodigitria on the Altar” (the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century – the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century) (Demyanchuk, 2016, p. 90): “A church stands on Mount Zion, and the Mother of God sits in this church, angels came to her. It is enough for you, the Mother of God, to sing and go (name) to take away the fallow (convulsions)” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 439).

In some texts, the genitrix acquires dual features: “The church stands in a clear field, and in the church the throne stands. Two young ladies are sitting behind the throne, a glass of water is standing in front of them, they are sitting and guessing (name) the black disease is being repelled. George came to them on a gray horse, on a golden saddle. And that one sits and thinks, this pain is denied to them. Let this pain go to the dark forest, to the swift river” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 438). Text № 438 describes another principle of treatment, which is implemented in the sequence: recognition → “pouring out” → sending the disease. The ritual “pouring” imitates the movement “beyond the water”, i.e., downstream – to the “other” world, therefore it is implemented by “two maidens”, and their actions are reminiscent of girls’ divination on Catherine, whose name is associated with the “mysterious” Hecate (Rybakov, 1994, p. 382), and is functionally compared to the “prophesess” Mokoshsha (Galkovsky, 2000, vol. 2, p. 23). The number of “young ladies” is determined by the myth and associated with the dual image of Fate-Misfortune (Serbian *Спећа-Неспећа*), i.e., the result of treatment-divination depends on a fateful choice of these mythological characters. Magical manipulations with water are also found during the neutralization of “lessons” (*Mörderer Blick*), which was carried out by extinguishing “thirty nine” embers in a vessel with unstarted water (*ungeöffnetes Wasser*) (Rylsky, 1991, p. 36). The floating of embers on the surface of water confirms the existence of “lessons” in a patient’s body, on the other hand, their drowning means destruction of the disease spirit and ends with a verbal statement of its blinding-destruction, as it is evidenced by the demonstrative pronoun “that”

<sup>11</sup> The correlation of the concepts “to plant” is fixed in the phrase “to plant a tree”, as well as the use of the verb “to plant” in the sense of “to install conveniently / reliably”.

(i.e., “mischievous”, “hostile”): “If they had eaten it, they would have had those eyes” (Chubynsky, 1995, p. 138)<sup>12</sup>. Water in this case acquires characteristics similar to the image of terra mater, which accepts only the pure and sinless into its bosom (Greek Εικατερίνη – pure). “Spoken” (das Wort verderben) embers do not sink, just as the bodies of ghouls and godless people do not rot in the ground. Similar actions were carried out during the examination of women suspected of sorcery (“incantation”), who were forcibly immersed in water (Miloradovich, 1993, p. 58), (Dysa, 2003, p. 192).

Over time, archaic motifs of sitting “on a mountain” or “under a tree” are correlated. The sacral figure of the mater magni is transformed into patriarchal characters, more typical of the Middle Eastern mythological tradition: “There stood a Veper oak on the mountain at Calvary. Seven martyrs Archistratus Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Mephtodymus, Sizontius, Clementius, Ivan the Forerunner sat under that oak, and they saw a terrible, wonderful miracle, and seventeen women came out of the sea, simply naked, untied, with loose hair. Ivan the Forerunner approached them <...> and gave them a hundred conjuring wounds on their heads with his cane. “Oh, Ivan the Forerunner! Whoever will chant our names or whoever will read water<sup>13</sup> over our heads, we will not touch him for ever and ever, amen” (Recipes of folk medicine, 1992, p. 92); “On Mount Zion, Jesus Christ is sitting, in a golden veil, repelling the evil spirit from (name) with a spear and a bayonet” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 1074). A characteristic feature of such texts is a shift in emphasis in the “behavior” of a sacred patron, who acquires the characteristics of a heavenly warrior – a defender of the territory heavenly from the aggressive expansion of the other world (fever, “evil spirit”). Modified images of the heavenly spearman, who “sits” under a tree in a waiting position, were reflected in the folk story “Cossack Mamai”<sup>14</sup>. The tradition of depicting the defender in a “sitting” position can be traced in fundamental art. In particular, along with the warriors-riders (the story of George the Snake-Wrestler), the image of “wise rulers” sitting in contemplation is common<sup>15</sup>.

It was noted above that the “sitting” position testifies to the appropriate status of the ritual participants, as it imitates the actions of the Creator and Savior, who “sits on the throne” and “rules a just court”<sup>16</sup>. In traditional culture, the primary right to “sit” is given to “God’s representatives on earth” – to priests and rulers, in other versions the “sitting” position is a visual statement of a ritual act or a transitional state (for example, the positions of the young). In this case, “sitting” occupies an intermediate position between vertical “standing” and horizontal “lying”, which are part of the binary “life / standing – death / lying”. The association of “standing” with life, and “lying” with death can be traced in nominative constructions that denote the vertical arrangement of sacred objects, icons, candles, photographs (they are

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<sup>12</sup> Similar expressions are often used in the magic of destruction and are opposed to the prayer “Amen”.

<sup>13</sup> Ritual pouring is accompanied by prayers.

<sup>14</sup> According to scholars, the stone women located on the mounds were called “mothers” (!), in addition, the Tatar “mamay” means “no one” (Poshivailo), so it may be of Tabustic origin.

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the corresponding plots visualize the New Testament parable: “Who among you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the expenses, whether he has something to finish, so that sometimes, when he lays the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it, they didn’t start laughing at him, saying that that man started to build, but he couldn’t finish! Or what king, going to war against another (king), does not first sit down and consider whether he can stand with ten thousand against him who goes with twenty thousand against him? If he can’t, then, as he is still far away, he sends an embassy and asks for peace” (Gospel of Luke, 14, 25–35).

<sup>16</sup> “The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” (Acts of the Apostle, 2, pp. 35–36); “When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory, and all nations will gather before Him” (Gospel of Matthew, pp. 25, 31); “Jesus said to them: I tell you the truth, you who have followed Me, at the restoration of the world, when the Son of Man will sit on the throne of His glory, you will also sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel” (Gospel of Matthew, 19, 28); and also the Gospel of Matthew, 8, 10–13; 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians, 2, 1–4; Gospel of Luke, 14, 25–35).



always placed), desacralized expressions such as “put a mohorych”. Instead, the opposite meanings are marked by a horizontal arrangement – “to lie down in the grave”, “to fall asleep forever”: “Moon, moon, where were you? Beyond the seas, beyond the forests. Where the dead lie” (Star Water, 1993, p. 13); ““New moon <...> were you in the other world?” “Yes, I was”. “Have you seen the dead?” “Yes, I saw”. “What do they do?” “They lie dumbfounded”; ““New moon, new moon, don’t the young man’s teeth hurt?” “They don’t hurt and don’t sting. Let them lie like a stone”” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 475, 480, 499). The motif of lying as a “dumb, cold stone” characterizes the afterlife as a priori motionless, which explains the taboo of “disturbing” the bones of the deceased (literally, “stirring up the past”, reviving long-forgotten offenses). The corresponding attitude is strengthened when it is carried out by foreigners, which explains T. Shevchenko’s radical attitude to the archaeological excavations in Chyhyryn: “And my lovely graves / Moskal is tearing up ... / Let him dig, dig up, / He is not looking for his own, <...> / The grave was dug up in four parts. / Diggered grave. / What were they looking for there? / What was buried there / Old parents? Oh, if only, / If only they found what was buried there, / The children wouldn’t cry, the mother wouldn’t grieve” (“Diggered Grave”). The earthly embodiment of the “stable” past (as that which preceded the “changing” present) in the sacral topography of traditional culture is the “grave”, which is indirectly confirmed by the etymology of this concept related to slavonic *mogō* – I can. Assumptions regarding the approach from the Bulgarian homila, from Greek γέμω – I am filled, as well as the comparison of \*mogyla from Greek μέγαρον – a hall for saints in a temple or from Middla Irish \*magu-ulā – Magician’s hill, consisting of Khotansaksk. ula = Avest. *ərəδwa-* – high (Fasmer, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 634–635) are hypothetical. Comparisons with Russian *моцный, моць* – the remains of a saint, also *моч-міч* from Slavonic *мошть*, Czech *moc* – a lot, Slavonic \**mokť* from \**mogo* – I can, related to Gothic *mahts* – power (Fasmer, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 635–636, 667–668) are also interesting. In a broad sense, “grave” is perceived as a cult structure associated with ritual burial or sacrifice (mound, temple, cross, monument, etc.), around which the space of traditional culture is organized<sup>17</sup>. From this it becomes clear why status ancestors are depicted in a “sitting” position, as if stating their visual presence among the living, which implies “establishing” communication contacts with them: ““New moon, new moon, where have you been?” “In that world”. “What did you see?” “The dead”. “What do they do?” “They are sitting” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 502). Examples of “sitting” monumental sculptures of “status” ancestors, which serve as a kind of portals of communication with the past are interesting in this regard. For example, there are monuments to M. Hrushevsky and M. Bulhakov in Kyiv, T. Shevchenko in Chernihiv, S. Petlyura in Vinnytsia, L. Utyosov in Odesa, etc.

The positioning of “standing” as a sign of life (vertical dynamics of growth) also explains the semantics of the texts, the utterance of which was supposed to establish and stabilize the internal organ displaced due to excessive tension: “Goldsmith, stand in the town <...> where your mother gave birth to you <...> called you a colonel, a colonel ordered, he was looking for a small town, how stone churches should stand, so you stand in place”; “I take it with my veins, strength, nails, claws, so that (name)’s joints become strong. The Lord established the earth and the sky, established by my hands” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 583, 606). Text № 606 looks interesting, at the beginning of which the healer enlists the support of totemic beings (“veins, forces, nails, claws”). Probably the naming of the places of strength should reproduce the original integrity by establishing “*брені*”

<sup>17</sup> In the Soviet empire, a mausoleum, a hill of glory or an obelisk symbolizes a “stable” past, which its adepts try to revive from time to time.

(from the Old High German *brecha*: New High German *brechen* – to break (Fasmer, 1986, vol. 1, p. 213), the connection with Ukrainian *брехати* – to distort reality, to violate the established order) is possible. “Establishment” here can be understood as the reproduction of the primary order – the “eternal standing” of heaven and earth (their cultural analogues of “stone churches” № 583), where the disease, like the deceased, must occupy a horizontal position (that is, remain in the past): “So that you lie like a dead person so that your teeth do not ache” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 536). Similar plots can serve as an explanation of magical manipulations of the enemy’s trace (his place of standing), as a result of which he (as well as the “zoltochnik” in texts № 583, 606) is deprived of the ability to move. The key action of such rituals is the application of the bones of the deceased (“recumbent”, “immobile”) to the trace: “Kovtunychyk, kovtunychyk (Latin *plica polonica*) <...> so that you do not walk on the bones, do not settle anywhere <...> you will settle down, as people from the other world will settle down, and follow in your footsteps” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 618). Magical manipulations with the trace are recorded in enchantment rites, which were performed with the aim of “tying” a man to her (fixing his location): “So that he did not go to other women, it was necessary to take earth from his trace, mix it with the sacred poppy and to shower him sleepy from head to toe, saying: “I will sprinkle you with earth and holy poppy and I will not allow to go to bad women”” (Secret power of words, 1992, № 32).

The sacredness of the “sitting” position is evidenced by tangential actions of a symbolic nature, in particular, the commemorative sitting of the “living” next to / together with the “dead”. An important component of memorial services is the story about the deeds of the deceased (that’s why “either good or nothing is said about the deceased”). Ritual speaking with the deceased (or instead of him) is a life-affirming act, as it voices otherworldly silence and is associated with other symbolic actions, for example, opening the mouth of the deceased and feeding him. The tradition of posthumous sitting is compared with historical facts, in particular, with ritual sitting on mounds (places of ancestors) and funeral pyres. F. Androshchuk draws parallels to this custom in Russian princes and Scandinavian kings. The author notes that the power of the prince was considered to be valid when he sat for a certain time on an earthen mound, which could be an ancestral burial ground, after that he pronounced an oath to rule justly (Androshchuk, 2003, pp. 5–10). The reception of a ritual sitting as a necessary component of coronation is confirmed by chronicle material where these concepts are equated: “And the wife said to [Boris] his father: “Here is your father’s wife. Go sit in Kyiv at your father’s table”; “Svyatopolk sat down in Kyiv after his father, and summoned the citizens of Kyiv and began to distribute property to them” (Chronicle of Rus, 1990, p. 77). Hence the names of ancient Russian settlements are “posads”, where princely governors “posadskiye” managed. The desecrated remnants of sacrificial meals have come down to our time as the custom of “exposing a mohorych” for a position. The distribution of part of the property by the prince after sitting on the table may be a rudiment of the ancient rite of sacrifice to the people who elected him to rule, and is connected with the threefold division of property after his death, about which Ibn-Faldan mentions: “The deceased was put in the grave temporarily, they put a drink (probably honey), vegetables and a harp (or a stringed instrument in general) near him, and they themselves got busy preparing clothes and everything else necessary for him. This lasted for ten days. His property, as usual, was divided into three parts: one-third is given to the family, one-third is used for clothing the deceased, and one-third is for the drink that is drunk on the day of the funeral” (Hrushevsky, 1991, p. 2).

Thus, the memorial sitting and sitting on a powerful “table” (of a predecessor) should be considered successive stages of a single ritual complex of inheritance of power (seat), since in mythology a secular power is considered to be legitimate when it is “sanctioned” by the

ancestors. In the context of sitting on the throne / table, the motif of sitting at the table together also acquires a symbolic meaning. The orders preserved the remains of descriptions of ritual meals, when the dish was demonstratively consumed from one bowl: “The moon is in the sky, fish is in the sea, bear is in the forest, master is in the house. As they should not gather together, should not sit at the same table, should not drink from the same cup of wine, should not eat from the same cup of grass, so the servant of God <...> should not have a toothache” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 510). Sitting at a common table recalls the descriptions of ritual family meals mentioned in the epic of Kyiv cycle (Bylinas, 1958, pp. 107, 87), which is indicated by the naming of the moon, oak, and stone as brothers: “The new moon is in the sky, and the oak is on the earth, and the stone is in water. When those three brothers will get up to eat from one half-bowl, then <...> the born, praying, baptized woman will have toothache” (Recipes of folk medicine, 1992, p. 75). Calling objects different in nature “brothers” can hypothetically refer to ancient Russian totemic clans, the leaders of which fraternized during joint ritual meals.

In this aspect, the semantics of memorial dinners “by the whole world”, which are held every year on the farewell, are perceived in a different way<sup>18</sup>. Sitting together at the dining table, placed directly at the village cemetery or near it, is an element of the symbolic kinship of the “living” and the “dead”. The vestiges of this custom are mentioned in healing texts: “<...> beyond the seas, there were tables in rows, the gentlemen sat at those tables, they neither sew, they neither embroider, nor dab, nor wire” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 439). It is obvious that we are talking about the dead, since they (as well as the mentioned above “grandmother”) do not do the work of the living (“neither dab nor wire”). Their other social status is also emphasized – “gentlemen”, who “sit” at parallel tables (“rows”), which resembles the rationally correct arrangement of burials in the cemetery. At the funeral, the burial mound serves as a “table-throne”, on which memorial dishes are placed – bread, kolyvo, eggs and sweets. The existence of a ritual table as a place of sacrifice presupposes the existence of a binary opposition “on the table – under the table” as a variant of the semantic opposition of “top-life” and “bottom-death”, therefore in healing magic the disease was placed “below, under the table”, and the sick – “above, at the table”: “(name) is sitting at the table, and (his) pain is under the table”; “Jesus Christ came to life (name) into the world, he was born, descended, was lit by the moon, surrounded by stars, lit by the sun. (Name) sits at the table, and evil is under the table” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 435, 445).

The analysis of the beliefs associated with the ritual “sitting” seems to be incomplete without taking into account another important component of ritual initiations. We are talking about impregnation as a symbolic putting “in place”, since the birth of a child in an archaic society is considered to be legitimate only if there is a “vacant” place vacated for it by an ancestor. Hence there are the prehistoric customs of sacrificing the old and infirm, which stimulates the birth of the young and strong (Veletskaya, 1978). In “Tale of Bygone Years” it is said that in years of bad harvest and famine, they killed the “old chad”, which “holds the gobino”<sup>19</sup>, i.e. interferes with the growth of young shoots: “In the same summer (1024), the Magi rose up <...> and killed old people <...> saying that they keep gobino (harvest).

<sup>18</sup> At the memorial dinner, the deceased “takes” a prominent place, and his presence is marked by a photograph and a ritual treat in the form of water and bread.

<sup>19</sup> Serbian, Croatian *гобино* – spelled <Gothic. *gabēi* is related to *gabēins* – wealth, and also to Irish *gabim* – capio, lat. *habēō*; with another degree of vocalism: Gothic *giban* – to give (Fasmer, 1986, vol. 1, p. 423). *Гобина* – harvest, abundance of earthly fruits: “Канѣ ре(к). аще изгониши мѣ ѿ гобины земля. то и ѿ лица твое(г) скрѣюся”; “Не презри немл(с)твна болнаго. в гобинѣ сыи и в житѣи чай бури вѣщемъ приде(г) болѣзнь. придетъ нищета” (Dictionary of the Old Russian language, 1988).

And there was a great mutiny, and famine in the whole land” (Metropolitan Hilarion, 1991, pp. 345–346). In ritual texts, conception is perceived as the placement of the future child by the father in the mother’s womb: “The goldsmith, God’s helper, sit in the town, on the golden chair”; “The goldsmith, <...> has become covered on the royal seat, cups are poured”; “The father created you, God created you, the mother gave birth to you, put you in place, the grandmother cut the navel, tied it to her place” (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 585, 587–588, 596), therefore the placenta is called a “place”.

Medical text № 596 seems interesting, which consists of four semantic blocks describing the time sequence from fertilization to birth: “the father created you” → “God created you” → “the mother gave birth to you, put you in place” → “the grandmother cut the navel, tied it to her place”. According to the text, the creator of the child is the father: “the father co-created you”. Cf.: the Old Russian noun “тварь” denotes a visible part of the body, for example, the face (Materials, 1903, vol. 3, pp. 930–932); the prefix “co-” is a sign of the joint action of God and the father. Therefore, God not only sanctifies the actions of the father, but breathes soul into the newborn, i.e., “gives” him life (“God co-created”). The perception of spirituality as a divine “gift” is found in carols – rudiments of the etiological myths of the Indo-Europeans: “There is a big world, there is also a blue sea: hey, God give it! Cherry trees grow at these blue seas: hey, God give it!” (Sosenko, 1994, p. 227)<sup>20</sup>. Depending on the context, the concepts “create” and “give” (or its “inverted” projection “destroy” and “give”) can be situational synonyms: cf. with Old Russian. “со-з-дание, со-творение” (Materials, 1893 – 1912, vol. 3, p. 710). The corresponding situation is explained by the fact that the semantic relationship between God and father is an echo of the patriarchal system, when the right of the first wedding night belonged to the oldest and the strongest, later to the representative of the ancestor – the priest. When the father / God is credited with the creation of the child, then the mother gives birth / “releases into the world” (materialization of *materia prima*): “the mother gave birth, put you in place”. In addition, the eldest woman of the family “ties” the child to the place by tying the umbilical cord: “the grandmother cut the navel and tied it to her place”. The high frequency of use of the prefixes “co-” shows that the birth ceremony is understood as a joint action with Someone, possibly with an archaic Genus (?).

Associations of the royal throne and the mother’s womb are found in calendar rites. During the meeting of the spring, a low hill was built – a throne, where a young girl (“princess-queen”) was placed or an egg was placed around which dances were conducted (Corinsky, 1995, p. 227). The erotic subtext of the rite can be seen in the possible correlation of the circle / dance with the place of conception and birth, which is personified by a girl (potential maternity) or an egg. The cosmic principle of fertilization, the model of which is demonstrated during the performance of the rite, is projected onto people and can be traced in the custom of placing the bride (Voitovych & Hlushko, 2022) “princess-queen” on the “throne”. For example, among Bulgarians, the wedding ceremony is called “buchka”, which consists in solemnly placing the bride and her friends in penance near the icons. Similar customs are recorded among the Avars and some other peoples (Savarin & Fedchyshyn, 2021). M. Kostomarov saw in the position the vestiges of the ancient custom of seating the prince on the table.

A ceremonial analogue of the “throne” can be a coat, the semantics of which is also related to a woman’s womb. Thus, during the treatment of the “baby”, the mother had to sit on the

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<sup>20</sup> In traditional culture, it was believed that in contrast to the divine, there is a harmful “gift” that is sprinkled into food or drinks by witches

baby's face, simulating a rebirth. Sometimes the child was wrapped in a *red* belt and covered with a *black* coat with wool on the outside. The combination of red, black and hairy is a sign of the reproductive organ: "When the child cries <...> the child should be put in place – wrapped in a red belt"; "You have to sit down with your bare ass on the child's face and say: "What a guest, such an honor". And hurry up, so that someone can cover the child with a black coat" (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 227, 466). In this case, the semantics of the "throne" in the funeral rite, where the body of the deceased was returned "to its place" in the bosom of mother-earth becomes clear, so the location of the deceased sitting down seems to be logical.

The future child's placement in the womb ("on the golden chair", "royal seat") is later implemented as the placement of an adult descendant on the father's farm, which explains the inheritance of land through the male line. The literal meaning of this custom is to imitate the father's seat, who "plants" in the womb, but must provide or give "his", otherwise "someone else's" (cf. "they knocked out old people") seat to his descendant. Thus, in traditional society, the legitimacy of birth (implantation in the womb) is determined by two factors: the child takes the ancestor's place and inherits his name (compare with the custom of calling a grandson by his grandfather's name); the descendant receives an inheritance from the father – a place on the earth, which explains the careless treatment of orphans or illegitimate children who are not "secured" with their place, which indicates the interruption of the ritual connection "ancestor – descendant". Cf. with the custom of burying the navel under the threshold of the house – the future newborn's seat (Plots in Polissia, 2003, № 597).

**The Conclusions.** In traditional culture, the performance of ritual actions corresponds to a certain sequence, which must follow the process of "divine providence", the completion of which is marked by a person's creation. In this regard, a human body is not only a sign, but rather a model of the sacred space organization. Repetition of natural locations, which the participant of the ritual imitates, involves the transformation of global values into the plane of specific meanings (the "cultivation of nature" takes place). In particular, a horizontal position of the body is interpreted as inanimate, while a vertical position corresponds to the opposite meaning. At the same time, the ritual designations of "horizontal / dead" contain the idea of a subsequent resurrection (the perspective of bodily verticalization), as it is evidenced by taboo forms with a direct hint of the temporality of this state ("deceased"). Thus, the idea of an absolute completion is denied in the myth, and life is understood as an alternation of birth-death. However, in exceptional situations, simulation of the final termination phase is allowed in the rite. We are talking about the post-mortem non-alternative fixation of the "recumbent" bodies of "ghouls" and "witches", which was carried out by straddling or crushing them.

In contrast to the dual vertical-and-horizontal positions that mark the "life-death" states, status mythological characters are in an intermediate (neutral) "sitting" position. The descriptions of the places, where they are placed, are iconic – on an island, at the blue sea, under / next to a tree, which symbolize the patient's imaginary return to the times of the creation of the world (the "pre-disease" state). The main feature of the "sitting" characters is the refusal to perform the work of the "living" people, related to the production of thread and canvas. Involvement in spinning and weaving associates these images with the goddesses of fate, who, according to the logic of the myth, should "weave" the thread of life, but don't do this. The negative characteristics of the goddess of fate images are juxtaposed with the magic of cure-enchancement-destruction, which is realized with the help of the reverse rotation of the spindle. Changing the direction of movement provokes the opposite consequences – the transformation of "sick" into "healthy", "indifferent" into "in love" or "alive" into "dead". For



this reason, the “sitting” images of a “grandmother” and “maidens” have dual characteristics, combining the opposite states of “life” and “death”, which explains the dosed use of funeral cult attributes in healing rituals.

The semantics of mythological characters with signs of the “otherworld” is compared with the image of the archaic genitrix. The rudiments of honoring the great mother are recorded in oronyms, which could be used as ancient sanctuaries. A similar function is taken over by landscape objects of artificial origin, for example, mounds on which anthropomorphic stone stelae, or graves, were placed, the ritual use of which is combined with the sacrificial “throne”, which performs on memorial days the function of a kind of portal that connects “living” and “dead”. Ritualized elements of the “sitting” position are also recorded in transitional rites – at funerals when sitting next to / with the “deceased”, age initiation ceremonies, enthronement ceremonies. In this way, there is a ritual imitation of the actions of the Creator-Savior, who “sits” on the heavenly throne and justly rules the world.

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